

THE GRAVEL PIT TRAIL

At the core of Access Fingringhoe is a trail around the gravel pit workings. Extracting the sand and gravel is only part of the picture. Care is taken to record and preserve the archaeological heritage. Environmental impact is minimised; water used in processing is surface water not drawn from bore holes or the rivers.

When the work is over great care is also taken in reclamation, ensuring that habitats for the wildlife are retained or even extended. And with the creation of its own Outdoor Classroom, a legacy for the future has been created.

Have an enjoyable walk. Delight in the countryside with views across the estuary. Discover the history, wildlife and the operations of the Fingringhoe gravel pit. Follow the Fingringhoe Gravel Pit Trail.



THE WILDLIFE

There are a range of habitats supporting a wide range of wildlife. Farm hedges and grass field margin, scrub & woodland, disused and working gravel pits, and saltwater marshes attract small mammals and reptiles, birds, and insects.

As you follow the trail information boards will help point out the wildlife you might see, here are just a few to look out for.



Adder



Brown Butterfly



Sand Martin



Muntjac Deer



What's in a name?

The name Fingringhoe is Saxon and can be traced back to around 975 AD. One theory has it that the meaning relates to the land belonging to the Fingringas, the descendants or followers of a man of similar name. Another is that it comes from the Danish (subsequently Old English) word for 'finger' and thus the finger of land that diverts the Colne eastwards between Roman River and Geedon Creek.

THE WORKINGS

The gravel pit workings are providing the raw materials for building projects in London – in particular the 2012 Olympic complex. The sand and gravel extracted is carried by conveyor belt to the ballast quay in Fingringhoe where it is processed and then shipped by barge up the Thames to London.

Each year around 200,000 tonnes is excavated. The topsoil and subsoil from the land are kept for use in reclamation when the excavation is complete. After restoration, the level of the land will be some 9m lower as no waste or other material will be used to back-fill any part of the quarry.

The sand and gravel beds were once the Thames fluvial bed and the layers show different types of shells, etc. The cliffs are cut and left deliberately so that they can be the nesting sites for birds and insects. Sand Martins burrow into the cliffs to nest as they will be protected from rats and other predators.

As the vegetation, eg gorse and blackthorn, grows, then more insects and birds will populate the area. Badgers are known to like to create their setts in sandy soils. Adders, grass snakes and lizards will be found in sandy soils while the ponds formed in the bottom of the workings encourage common newts.

